



STATE OF MICHIGAN
FAMILY INDEPENDENCE AGENCY
LANSING

JENNIFER M. GRANHOLM
GOVERNOR



MARIANNE UDOW
DIRECTOR

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The Detroit News
600 W. Fort Street
Detroit MI 48231

Letters editor:

A recent opinion published in your newspaper on Michigan's child support program contained inaccurate information. Contrary to the information contained in the opinion, Michigan ranks third best in the nation in child support collections. Our status is a testament to the hard work and collaboration of Friends of the Court, Judges, Prosecuting Attorneys, the Family Independence Agency Office of Child Support, and especially the tens of thousands of Michigan parents who pay their child support regularly. In 2003, more than \$1.4 billion was paid by these responsible and honorable parents.

The reality is Michigan ranks fourth highest in the nation in collections per child support worker. Michigan's program is also cost effective, collecting \$4.73 in child support for every dollar invested in the program.

While we agree that if all other enforcement tools fail and the parent has the ability to pay, incarceration is certainly justified, the writer assumes that the mere threat of jail will improve collections. Experience has shown us there may be other results, including the strong impulse for many non-paying parents to run farther, burrow deeper and never seek the help they need to improve their payment record.

Over the last eighteen months, families and workers have experienced a number of changes in Michigan's child support program. During this time, Michigan implemented a new statewide automated case management system and redirected all child support payments to a central collection site in Lansing. Michigan's families adjusted quickly as demonstrated by the average of \$30 million a week currently being collected by the Michigan State Disbursement Unit for children.

While the job will not be done until every child has the support that they deserve, child support workers should be proud of their service to the children and parents of Michigan.

Sincerely,

Marianne Udow